

Sūrah Jāthiyah

Central Theme and relationship with the Previous Sūrah

This *sūrah* is the counterpart of the previous one with regard to its name, introductory verses and basic meanings. The difference is that of brevity and explanation. The Quraysh are told in it that every part of the heavens and the earth is replete with arguments which substantiate monotheism and the Hereafter and God has also detailed them out in His Book; they are warned and threatened in explicit words that if they are not being able to understand these arguments, then they, in fact, cannot understand anything of this world; their matter now rests with God; He will take a decision in this regard.

Muslims are given glad tidings in unequivocal words that with patience they should bear the circumstances they are facing. If they resolutely adhere to their stance, theirs shall be the final victory. The hardships they will bear for this cause will not go waste; God will richly recompense them for this steadfastness.

This *sūrah* belongs to the time when the Jews had started to openly support the Quraysh. For this reason, the Jews too are rebuked very blatantly that because of their misdeeds they have been deposed from the position of religious and political leadership which God had bestowed on them. Now their matter will be presented in the court of God, and He will then pass a verdict about their fate. At the same time, Muslims are warned to stick to the radiant path God has made evident to them and to be aware of these evil religious people. They are trying hard to force Muslims to adopt the innovations they have fabricated and thereby deprive them of the path of God the way they have deprived themselves of it.

Analysis of the Meanings

Verses (1-6): This Qur'ān has been revealed by God in a thorough and elaborate manner. The arguments to substantiate the belief of monotheism it is calling people to and the Day of reward and punishment it is threatening people with are present in every nook and corner of the heavens and the earth. The creation of man, the alternation of day and night, the descent of rain, the appearance of its blessings on earth, the movement of the winds – all contain very clear signs of the belief of

monotheism and of the Hereafter – only if they reflect and are prepared to accept the consequences of this reflection. It is these facts which the Qur’ān is presenting. If people are not being able to understand these clear facts, then after them what is it that they will understand and acknowledge.

Verses (7-11): The ringleaders of the creed of polytheism who have fabricated a false religion and have become so ardent in blindly supporting it that they are not willing to listen to the words of God are warned. When the Book of God is recited before them, they walk away with such arrogance as if they had heard nothing. If they come to realize that anything presented is very potent for the hearts, they start mocking it in order to reduce its influence. These people should remember that this display of arrogance will lead them to their doom and when they will be cast into Hell, their treasures and riches which they obtained through illegal means will be of no avail to them nor will their alleged deities they had fabricated and associated with God be of any benefit to them.

Verses (12-15): Some arguments in support of monotheism are presented in a new style and Muslims are urged to show patience and perseverance. They should not the slightest care about the nonsensical talk of the Idolaters; on the contrary, they should remain steadfast on their stance. If these adversaries do not listen to him, they will only harm their own selves; no harm will come to the believers.

Verses (16-20): Sorrow is expressed on the Israelites: they were blessed with political authority, prophethood, abundant resources of sustenance as well as the leadership of other nations; however, they never fulfilled their obligations towards these favours; in fact, they created differences in the religion of God because of mutual jealousy and animosity. Muslims are directed that the Almighty has taken back the *sharī’ah* He had entrusted to the Jews and handed it over to them. They should guard themselves from going astray like the Jews and strongly adhere to the religion of God. They should not be overawed at this time by the alliance of the Jews and the Idolaters. The help of God will nevertheless remain with those who fear Him.

Verses (21-37): Some objections raised by the rejecters of the Hereafter are dispelled. The state of affairs on that day of the deniers of the Hereafter is depicted. At the end, the subject of monotheism is once again taken up.

Section I: Verses (1-15)

Text and Translation

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

حم (١) تَنْزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ مِنَ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ (٢) إِنَّ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَآيَاتٍ
لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٣) وَفِي خَلْقِكُمْ وَمَا يَبُتُّ مِنْ دَابَّةٍ آيَاتٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ (٤) وَاختِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ
وَالنَّهَارِ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ رِّزْقٍ فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَتَصْرِيفِ
الرِّيَّاحِ آيَاتٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ (٥) تِلْكَ آيَاتُ اللَّهِ تَتْلُوهَا عَلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ فَبِأَيِّ حَدِيثٍ بَعْدَ
اللَّهِ وَآيَاتِهِ يُؤْمِنُونَ (٦) وَيُلْ لِّكُلِّ أَفَّاكٍ أَثِيمٍ (٧) يَسْمَعُ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ تُتْلَى عَلَيْهِ ثُمَّ يُصِرُّ
مُسْتَكْبِرًا كَأَن لَّمْ يَسْمَعْهَا فَبَشِّرْهُ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ (٨) وَإِذَا عَلِمَ مِنْ آيَاتِنَا شَيْئًا اتَّخَذَهَا هُزُوًا
أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ (٩) مِنْ وَرَائِهِمْ جَهَنَّمُ وَلَا يُغْنِي عَنْهُمْ مَا كَسَبُوا شَيْئًا وَلَا مَا
اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ (١٠) هَذَا هُدًى وَلِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ
رَبِّهِمْ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مِنْ رَّجْزٍ أَلِيمٍ (١١) اللَّهُ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الْبَحْرَ لِتَجْرِيَ الْفُلُكُ فِيهِ
بِأَمْرِهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ (١٢) وَسَخَّرَ لَكُم مَّا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا
فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا مِّنْهُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ (١٣) قُلْ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يَغْفِرُوا
لِلَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ أَيَّامَ اللَّهِ لِيَجْزِيَ قَوْمًا بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ (١٤) مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا
فَلِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ أَسَاءَ فَعَلَيْهَا ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ تُرْجَعُونَ (١٥)

This is Hā Mīm. The elaborate revelation of this Book is from God, the Mighty, the Wise. There are many sign in the heavens and the earth for those who profess faith. And similarly, in your own creation, and in the beasts He has spread all around are many signs for those who want to have conviction. And in the alternation of night and day, in the means of sustenance God sends down from the sky with which He revives the earth after its death, and in the moving about of the winds also are signs for men who understand. (1-5)

These are God's revelations that We are reciting to you with absolute truth. So after God and His signs what else will they believe in? Destruction is for every lying sinner who hears God's revelations recited to Him and then, as though he never heard them, persists in arrogance on his behaviour. So give them glad tidings of a painful torment. And when

he comes to know of something from Our revelations, He makes fun of them. It is these people for whom there is a humiliating torment. Hell is in front of them and what they have earned will not be of the slightest benefit to them nor shall those they have served besides God. And for them will be a great punishment. This is the real guidance and those who have denied their Lord's revelations will face a painful scourge that will produce shivers. (6-11)

It is God alone Who has made the ocean harmonious for you so that ships may sail upon it at His bidding and so that you may be grateful to Him. And it is He Who has put in your service what is in the heavens and the earth; all from Him. Indeed, there are signs in this for those who reflect. (12-13)

Tell the believers to forgive those who do not expect the great days of God to manifest so that God fully reward a people according to their deeds. He who does a virtuous deed, it is for his own good; and he who commits evil does so at his own peril. Then to your Lord shall you be returned. (14-15)

Explanation

حم (١) تَنْزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ مِنَ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ (٢)¹

The Qur'ānic name of this *sūrah* too is Hā Mīm. In the *tafsīr* of previous *sūrahs*, I have already alluded to the commonality of topics of the *sūrahs* which have this name.

Like the introductory part of the previous *sūrah*, this *sūrah* too contains a reference to the exaltedness and significance of the Qur'ān. However, the nature of significance mentioned here is different from the one mentioned in the previous *sūrah*. I have explained in detail the word تَنْزِيلُ at an appropriate place in this *tafsīr* and shown that it contains the meaning of gradual progression and elaborate effort and I have explained at various places in this *tafsīr* the nature of this elaborate effort and thoroughness of the Almighty in revealing the Qur'ān. Here, besides mentioning this elaborate arrangement, God has also referred to two of His attributes: 'Azīz and Ḥakīm. The former means powerful and dominant and the latter refers to someone whose each and every word and deed has some wisdom. By mentioning together these two attributes here, two things are evident:

Firstly, the God Who has revealed this Qur'ān in such a thorough and elaborate manner is not weak, frail and helpless; in fact, He is the

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sovereign Lord and the dominion of this universe is in His hands. This Qur'ān is not a request; it is a royal decree of the real Master of this Universe Who must necessarily be obeyed. If it is not duly honoured, then people should remember that when He will seize them no one will be able to stop Him.

Secondly, besides being powerful, sovereign and dominant, God is also wise. This means that every word and deed of His is based on wisdom. The majesty of His wisdom is evident from His Book which is replete with wisdom – only if people care to reflect on it. A majestic feature of His wisdom is that even though some ingrates and worthless people are showing disregard to His Book and to His Messenger, He in spite of being powerful and prevailing is not showing haste in seizing them. On the contrary, He keeps on extending their respite so that those who have the ability can mend their ways and make themselves worthy of His mercy and those who have wasted their abilities are conclusively conveyed the truth; on the Day of Judgement, they will have no excuse to present.

إِنَّ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَآيَاتٍ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٣)²

This verse refers to the call and message of the Qur'ān regarding monotheism and to the arguments it contains that are spread all around man to substantiate the Day of Judgement. It says the signs of what the Qur'ān is calling people to and what it is warning them of are present in every nook and corner of this world. However, they are useful only for those who profess faith. Those who do not profess faith remain blind even after observing everything and keep demanding more signs. If a new sign is shown to them as per their demand, even then they are not convinced and start demanding another one. The real thing is a person's intent. If a person has a yearning for the truth and the will to reach his destination, the Creator of heavens and the earth has left no stone unturned in guiding him to this destination. The heavens has landmarks everywhere which point to it and the earth also provides guidance at every step. However, people who are lured away by their desires can neither see these signals sent out by the heavens nor the signs put forth by the earth. They keep wandering about all their lives.

وَفِي خَلْقِكُمْ وَمَا يَبُثُّ مِن دَابَّةٍ آيَاتٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ (٤)³

2. There are many sign in the heavens and the earth for those who profess faith.

3. And similarly, in your own creation, and in the beasts He has spread all around are many signs for those who want to have conviction.

After directing attention to the composite signs of the heavens and the earth, attention is now drawn to the creation of man and to the tremendous system set up by God to nurture and sustain him. If a person reflects on all the phases of his creation, he will become aware of those facts about God's providence, power and wisdom which will leave no room for doubt in him about the oneness of God and about the Hereafter being possible and about reward and punishment being certain! How can it be difficult for the Creator Who has created man in such a grand mould from mud and a drop of water to recreate him? How can it be expected from the God Who for the purpose of nurturing man has made such elaborate arrangement from the first phase of his creation to the last that He will not hold man accountable. Why would not man – created with such great qualities – be held answerable for how he used these qualities? Moreover, what has come over man that he should associate partners with the God Who has put into his service the conflicting and opposing elements of nature.

The words وَمَا يَبْتُ مِنْ دَائِيَّةٍ refer to the resources of providence which the Almighty has blessed man with in the form of beasts. If man reflects only a little, there is no doubt that the multifarious benefits he is receiving from these beasts is not merely a chance happening; in fact, God has created these beasts to provide these benefits to man and made each of their benefits very appropriate for him. If man was in need to transport himself and his belongings and things, God created animals which were appropriate for this purpose. If man needed milk, meat, wool and hides, God created different beasts to provide him with these needs. All this bears evidence that the Creator of this world is very merciful and it is essential that He be shown gratitude. What this elaborate arrangement of blessing man with favours further necessitates is that a day come wherein God ask him about these favours and those who fulfilled their rights be rewarded and those who forgot God after receiving them be punished for their ingratitude.

The verb لَقَوْمٌ يُوقِنُونَ in يُوقِنُونَ is to express intention. In other words, the referred to phenomena contain numerous arguments in support of monotheism, the Hereafter and reward and punishment; however, mere existence of such arguments is not enough for them to be beneficial unless people have the intention to accept them. A person who does not want to be convinced invents one doubt or another against obvious realities.

وَإِخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ رِزْقٍ فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا

وَتَضْرِيفَ الرِّيَّاحِ آيَاتٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ⁴

The word *إِخْتِلَافٌ* here means the consecutive alternation of day and night. At the same time, it subtly refers to the difference in the temperament of the night and the day which is essential for the existence, sustenance and well-being of this universe. The words *مِنْ رِّزْقٍ* refer to water which becomes a means for sustenance. In other words, here the effect connotes the cause. This usage is common not only in Arabic but in every language.

The argumentative aspect found in the alternation of day and night is referred to by the Qur'ān in many places: in spite of the fact that both are opposites to one another: one is dry and the other is warm; one is peaceful and the other is noisy; one is dark and the other is radiant; however, to nurture man both of them form a harmonious pair. This is a very clear evidence to the fact that both have been created by the same God and at His bidding are continuously carrying out the responsibilities entrusted to them with full vigilance. If they had been created by different gods, then harmony and accord between the two would have been impossible and in the absence of this harmony, life on this earth would have been impossible.

Similar is the situation with the rain. Though it comes down from the heavens, it gives life to the earth and its inhabitants. This bears clear testimony to the fact that a single intention prevails in the heavens and the earth. If the heavens had their own god and the earth its own, then why would the heavens rain down sustenance for the inhabitants of the earth? Moreover, every person without distinction observes that at times a piece of land is dry and desolate and there is not a single place in it in which any form of life can be seen when suddenly it springs to life after receiving rain. So will it be difficult for the God Whose majesties like these one witnesses in every season to recreate this world after it dies?

The words *وَتَضْرِيفَ الرِّيَّاحِ* point to the fact that in the movement of the winds also can be seen the signs of God's power, mercy, providence and punishment. It is quite evident that they are controlled by a single controller Who uses them as per His wisdom. If He stops them, the whole world will be destroyed in the blink of an eye. He can make them a boon for one people and a bane for another. It was because of this movement of the wind that God saved Moses (sws) and his people and

4. And in the alternation of night and day, in the means of sustenance God sends down from the sky with which He revives the earth after its death, and in the moving about of the winds also are signs for men who understand.

destroyed the Pharaoh and his people. Every now and then, it comes to our notice that farmers are very satisfied by the future of their crops; yet suddenly blows a storm and darkens this future; sailors while opening the sails of their ships and farmers while carrying their equipment to clean the wheat crop wait for suitable winds but no one except God has the authority to send such winds. Although, in these times, man on the basis of scientific advancement has become audacious enough to claim that he has been able to control the clouds and the winds to a great extent; however, a little jolt from providence becomes enough to expose the extent of this control. All these things clearly bear witness that it is one single Being Who rules over all the elements of the universe. Without His permission, even a single leaf cannot move from its place.

The words *لَقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ* imply that though the signs which bear witness to monotheism and the Hereafter are found at every step, only those will benefit from them who use their intellect. Those who don't use their intellect or use it to the extent of acquiring material benefits always remain deprived of the real majesty of these signs.

Here the Qur'ān has referred very briefly to these signs. For this reason, I too will confine myself to briefly alluding to them. All these signs have been explained in detail in previous *sūrahs* and I have full explained them there.

It is evident from the previous three verses that for the believers every nook and corner of this universe is replete with the signs of monotheism and the Hereafter. For the others too, these signs are not concealed on the condition that they have the courage to acknowledge and fully accept and the will to use their faculty of sense and reason. People who do not want to believe a reality however much evident it may be or do not use their faculty of sense and reason for the purpose it was given to them will never be cured of this blindness.

تِلْكَ آيَاتُ اللَّهِ نَتْلُوهَا عَلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ فَبِأَيِّ حَدِيثٍ بَعْدَ اللَّهِ وَآيَاتِهِ يُؤْمِنُونَ (٦)⁵

This verse sounds an assurance to the Prophet (sws) and rebukes his adversaries. The antecedent of the demonstrative pronoun *تِلْكَ* (these) is the signs found in the world around man and that within him referred to in the previous verses. The verse says that these are the signs of God's oneness, His power and wisdom and of the day of reward and punishment which God through the Qur'ān is reciting out to the Prophet (sws) with

5. These are God's revelations that We are reciting to you with absolute truth. So after God and His signs what else will they believe in?

their full consequences and implications. So evident are these signs that no sensible person can deny them. The Qur'ān is only calling people to accept their real consequences and implications. If his adversaries are not willing to accept the obvious consequences of these signs, then what else can be more convincing and satisfying on which they will profess faith!

The word *نَتْلُوها عَلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ* in *بِالْحَقِّ* refers to the certain and factual consequences which one reaches after reflecting on these signs. As a qualifying word, it alludes to the fact that as far as reflection on these signs is concerned, others too reflect on them but they do so with their confined and limited angles. For this reason, they are either not able to reach out to the realities concealed in them or they do reach out to them but since they are against their whims and desires, they avoid accepting them. For example, astronomers also reflect on the signs found in the heavens and the earth and medical scientists do research on the anatomy of man and zoologists deliberate on various aspects of animal life and meteorologists study the movement of winds, seasons of rain and their effects and climatic changes. However, all of them, because of their narrow mindedness, can in fact see from their telescopes and microscopes a spot as minute as a needle point yet are unable to the mountain of reality concealed by this point. The meteorologists will predict that in the next twenty four hours the weather will remain warm and dry and may also put forward absurd justifications for this. Many a time their predictions prove to be true and at times one cannot deny the justification put forth by them; however, their observation and analysis is confined to the nature of wind movement and its effects. They never bother to reflect beyond this to find out who the real Controller and Bringer about of changes is and what His rights are even though all the changes and transformations which occur in the universe are meant to take a person to the real question and find out its answer; moreover, if some fellow human being tells him a convincing answer to this question he should accept it. The Qur'ān has specially stressed those aspects of these signs which highlight the actual reality. Thus it has used the words: *نَتْلُوها عَلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ*.

A very important thing which becomes evident from this discussion is that the call and message of the Qur'ān is not based on forcing people to accept it; it is based on arguments found in the world within man and that around him as well as on the obvious norms of sense and human nature. The reason people who do accept these arguments is not that they are hidden from them; it is only because they find it against their base desires and thus want to evade them. People who are afflicted with this malady obviously will not accept anything which is against their whims

and desires even though it may be as radiant as the sun.

The second thing which becomes evident is that God and His signs are self-evident – in fact, the most self-evident of realities of this world. Those who reject them will never accept anything else; they are mere slaves of their desires and worship material things. If such people demand some new signs or miracles, then they are not worthy of being paid attention to. The greatest of miracles cannot open the eyes of such blind people!

وَيْلٌ لِّكُلِّ أَفَّاكٍ أَثِيمٍ (٧) يَسْمَعُ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ تُثْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِ ثُمَّ يُصِرُّ مُسْتَكْبِرًا كَأَن لَّمْ يَسْمَعْهَا
فَبَشِّرْهُ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ (٨)^٦

The rebuke sounded in the previous verse continues in these verses as well. Destruction awaits these people who have denied all these signs only to give credence to their sinful lives.

The word أَفَّاكٍ refers to a person who distorts facts; in other words, the signs of God refer to some other reality and he, while being a slave to his desires, completely changes and distorts it. The foremost people on whom this verse applies are the Idolaters of the Quraysh who had distorted and disfigured the religion of Abraham (sws) because of blindly following their whims and desires! However, the verse generally applies to all those who in every period of time distort and change the directives of God because of their base whims and desires.

The word أَثِيمٍ refers to a sinner, especially one who neither discharges his obligations nor fulfils the rights of others. The mention of this trait with the previous one shows that only those worthless people are guilty of conniving to distort facts who want to evade their rights and obligations towards God and want to insist on their sinful ways. The verse says that destruction awaits such wretched people. The reason is that the verses of God are being recited out to them but they very arrogantly walk away as if they heard nothing. This is a reference to the attitude the leaders of the Quraysh would adopt in response to the preaching of the Prophet (sws). In the very first place, they would regard going to the gatherings of the Prophet (sws) as something that would bring them shame; however, if they would go there at times or the Prophet (sws) would himself come to them to read out the Qur'ān to them, they would repulsively move away as if they had heard nothing!

6. Destruction is for every lying sinner who hears God's revelations recited to Him and then, as though he never heard them, persists in arrogance on his behaviour. So give them glad tidings of a painful torment.

The words **تُثَلَّى عَلَيْهِ** express the severity of their crime: if God's message has not reached someone and he remains unaware about it, then he may be afforded with a legitimate excuse; but what answer will the wretch give to God to whom the Prophet (sws) himself would go and vehemently deliver the message of God.

The words **يُصِرُّ مُسْتَكْبِرًا** point to the reason of their insistence on polytheism. The reason for this insistence is not because the reality is not evident to them

The words **فَبَشِّرْهُ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ** are an explanation of the **وَيْلٌ** (destruction) mentioned in the previous verse: all such arrogant people should be given glad tidings of a painful doom. In other words, the Prophet (sws) is asked to tell them that if because of conceit they have shut their eyes to the glad tidings of salvation, then in any case the Prophet (sws) should sound them glad tidings of the doom such people necessarily meet.

وَإِذَا عَلِمَ مِنْ آيَاتِنَا شَيْئًا اتَّخَذَهَا هُزُوًا أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ⁷

The previous verse mentions the attitude the arrogant would adopt when the Prophet (sws) himself would try to read out the Qur'ān to them. This verse mentions the attitude they would adopt when they would hear a Qur'ānic verse or directive through someone else. It says that when God's verses come to their knowledge, they make fun of them so that others are not influenced by them. It needs to be kept in consideration that at the time of revelation of the Qur'ān there existed people who would try to listen to the Qur'ān with an impartial mind and would also get influenced by it. These people would also try to bring its verses in the knowledge of their leaders in order to ask their opinion about them. Their leaders would immediately realize that they are getting influenced by it. To counter this effect they could not convince them through arguments by saying that such and such a verse of the Qur'ān is against sense and reason or against human nature or is factually incorrect. The only measure they could adopt was to make fun of the Qur'ān so that it is belittled and is not able to influence anyone. Though this despicable step would not produce the desired effect yet people having a weak personality would temporarily be deceived. This trick is adopted by all devils against the truth in every period of time.

The words **أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ** express that since the real motive of their attitude is the arrogance pointed out in the previous verse, they will

7. And when he comes to know of something from Our revelations, He makes fun of them. It is these people for whom there is a humiliating torment.

face a grievous punishment. They showed haughtiness before the truth. Hence they will face humiliation in the Hereafter. It needs to be kept in consideration that though refuge needs to be sought with God from all His torments; however, his greatest torment is one which is accompanied by humiliation. This torment is reserved specifically for the arrogant.

مِنْ وَرَائِهِمْ جَهَنَّمُ وَلَا يُغْنِي عَنْهُمْ مَا كَسَبُوا شَيْئًا وَلَا مَا اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ
وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ⁸

The meaning of the word وَرَاءَ like the words “here” and “there” is determined by the context and occasion. It can mean both “the back” and “the front”. The verse says that Hell is in front of them in which they will be flung. Once they enter it, neither will their illegally acquired treasures and riches which was the reason of their arrogance and evasion from the truth be of any avail to them nor will their alleged deities and intercessors which instead of God they regarded as their helpers be of any benefit to them.

The words وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ express the fact that this torment would not be easy to bear in any way; it would be a grievous one and its horrible nature cannot be imagined today.

هَذَا هُدًى وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مِنْ رَجْزٍ أَلِيمٌ⁹

This Qur’ān is a guidance revealed from God; it is no joke. Those who deny its verses or make fun of them should remember that they will face a painful torment. The words مِنْ رَجْزٍ explain the nature of this torment. The word رَجْزٍ refers to the torment which creates shivers. The implication is that it would not be any ordinary torment; it would be a painful one which will cause the hearts to shiver and tremble.

اللَّهُ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الْبَحْرَ لِتَجْرِيَ الْفُلُكُ فِيهِ بِأَمْرِهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ
تَشْكُرُونَ (١٢) وَسَخَّرَ لَكُم مَّا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا مِّنْهُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ

8. Hell is in front of them and what they have earned will not be of the slightest benefit to them nor shall those they have served besides God. And for them will be a great punishment.

9. This is the real guidance and those who have denied their Lord’s revelations will face a painful scourge that will produce shivers.

لَايَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ¹⁰ (١٣)

The previous four verses were interposed between the arguments cited in support of monotheism and the Hereafter so that the leaders of the Quraysh are warned forthwith and the Prophet (sws) is assured. From this verse, the actual line of discourse is taken up again. The verses say that it is God Who has put the sea in the service of man so that it allows him to cut across it in his ships. The word بِأَمْرِهِ refers to the fact that this happens especially because of God's directive. Had God not directed so, a ship would have drowned in the sea the way smaller objects are drowned when they enter it; on the other hand, a ship weighing thousands of tons sails on it. It is a God-made law that a small piece of iron drowns in the sea but a ship laden with thousands of tons of iron does not drown in it. It is evident from contextual indications that a word like لِتَرْكَبُوا (so that you embark [on it]) or لِتَسَافِرُوا (so that you travel [on it]) is suppressed before وَلِتَبْتَغُوا. The particle of conjunction وَ is an evidence to this suppression. The implication is that God has made this elaborate arrangement so that man can travel from one place to another and through trade strive to earn the blessings of God.

The words وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ point to the real message which should be received by every person – having even a little life in his conscience and intellect – observes in the various manifestations of God's providence. The Almighty has shown these majesties to man so that he can show gratitude to Him. It should be kept in consideration that it is this feeling of gratitude which is the foundation of worshipping God. I have explained this fact in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah Fātiḥah.

Consider next, the part: وَسَخَّرَ لَكُم مَّا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ. Before this part, how the seas had been put to the service of man has been alluded to because the sea is the most powerful of things that comes in the observation of man and which is apparently uncontrollable and most people have experienced sea travel also. After this specific mention, a reference is made to the general things of this world: the same God has put all other things of the heavens and the earth in the service of man.

The expression جَمِيعًا مِّنْهُ refers to the fact that all these things are directly or indirectly serving man. The word جَمِيعًا does not relate to the previous words; it relates to مِّنْهُ. In other words, none of these things

10. It is God alone Who has made the ocean harmonious for you so that ships may sail upon it at His bidding and so that you may be grateful to Him. And it is He Who has put in your service what is in the heavens and the earth; all from Him. Indeed, there are signs in this for those who reflect.

were harnessed by man nor by any other being nor are these things serving man of their own accord; all these, in fact, have been harnessed by God because He alone is their Creator and He alone controls them.

The words *إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ* express the fact that for people who deliberate there exist multifarious arguments in the world around man in favour of monotheism and the Hereafter.

– the fact that the elements of nature have been harnessed for man shows that none of these elements can occupy the status of God and be worshipped; every one of them by its very existence bears testimony to the fact that it is subservient to a superior authority who is using them on the basis of His will and wisdom.

– in spite of the fact that these elements are conflicting and opposing to one another they are harmonious with one another the way the parts of a machine are. This congruence between them shows that a single will prevails in this universe.

– this system contains such signs of providence, mercy and wisdom as forms an unassailable evidence to refute the fact that an uncontrollable and unrestrained force is running the affairs of this universe. His knowledge, mercy and wisdom necessitate that He also bring about a day in which He reward those who fulfilled their obligations towards His favours and punish those who did not duly value these favours and got involved in disbelief and polytheism. If He does not bring about such a day, then it would either mean that God forbid He is totally powerless or insensitive or merely wants to entertain Himself. All these conclusions are against His noble attributes.

The word *يَتَفَكَّرُونَ* at the end depicts the fact that as far as arguments are concerned, they are numerous. Every nook and corner of the universe is replete with them, and the Qur'ān has also fully explained them. The only thing that is lacking is reflection and deliberation. People do not reflect on the signs of God. This deliberation is something on which God does not force them; it is up to man himself to undertake it.

قُلْ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يَغْفِرُوا لِلَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ أَيَّامَ اللَّهِ لِيَجْزِيَ قَوْمًا بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ (١٤)

The word *يَغْفِرُوا* here means to forgive and ignore someone.

The expression *أَيَّامَ اللَّهِ* refers to the historic days of God's revenge and retribution in which He wiped out the rejecters of His messengers from the face of the earth. The history of past nations mentioned in the Qur'ān

11. Tell the believers to forgive those who do not expect the great days of God to manifest so that God fully reward a people according to their deeds.

refers to these days and the succeeding verses also mention them. The word قَوْمًا in قَوْمًا لِّجَزِي قَوْمًا refers to the enemies which are under discussion from the previous verses. It has been used as an indefinite noun to express hate and abhorrence. This usage is similar to that of the indefinite noun قُلُوبٌ in (أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا :٤٧). People who have interpreted it to refer to Muslims have failed to reflect on the context of the discourse and its eloquence of style.

Just as in verse six, the Prophet (sws) was sounded assurance on the stubbornness of his opponents, in a similar manner, the believers are assured here: they should not get dejected at the evil-doing of the evil-doers; in fact, they should ignore them for now. Since they do not fear that the horrible day they are being warned of will in fact manifest itself, they have become audacious. However, God is giving respite to such detestable people so that they are left with no excuse and then He will duly punish them. It is the practice of God to give full respite to the mischievous so that the truth is conclusively conveyed to them, and when they are seized by Him, they are left with no excuse.

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ أَسَاءَ فَعَلَيْهَا ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ تُرْجَعُونَ (١٥)¹²

This verse further elucidates the assurance sounded earlier: if these people adopt the path of virtue, they themselves will be rewarded for it and if they adhere to vice, then they alone will suffer its evil consequences. The believers will in no way be responsible for this since they had done their job of conveying the truth. Then everyone will come in the presence of God on the Day of Judgement. It will then be decided as to who is right and who is wrong and what fate each deserves.

Section II: Verses (16-23)

The succeeding verses discuss the attitude of the Jews they had adopted in their enmity with Islam to support the Idolaters. As is indicated earlier, in this period they had started to openly back them. Since the Jews were regarded as a religious group, their support had greatly encouraged the Idolaters. These circumstances entailed that they be exposed so that fear does not arise among the Muslims because of their opposition, and the Idolaters are also informed that people on

12. He who does a virtuous deed, it is for his own good; and he who commits evil does so at his own peril. Then to your Lord shall you be returned.

whose encouragement they feel very proud are actually even greater criminals in the eyes of God; if the Idolaters listen to their advice, then ultimately both will reach the same fate. In this regard, the Prophet (sws) is urged to adhere to his stance with full perseverance; he is told that he is now the bearer of the last *sharī'ah* of God and he should neither care about the Jews nor the Idolaters; only he and his companions enjoy the help of God and this help is sufficient!

Readers may now proceed to study the verses.

Text and Translation

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ (١٦) وَآتَيْنَاهُمْ بَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْرِ فَمَا اخْتَلَفُوا إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَعِيًّا بَيْنَهُمْ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَقْضِي بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ (١٧) ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاكَ عَلَى شَرِيعَةٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْرِ فَاتَّبِعْهَا وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (١٨) إِنَّهُمْ لَن يُغْنُوا عَنْكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا وَإِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ وَاللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ (١٩) هَذَا بَصَائِرُ لِلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ (٢٠) أَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِينَ اجْتَرَحُوا السَّيِّئَاتِ أَنْ نَجْعَلَهُمْ كَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَوَاءَ مَحْيَاهُمْ وَمَمَاتُهُمْ سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ (٢١) وَخَلَقَ اللَّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ وَلِتُجْزَىٰ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ (٢٢) أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ إِلَٰهَهُ هَوَاهُ وَأَضَلَّهُ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ وَخَتَمَ عَلَىٰ سَمْعِهِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَجَعَلَ عَلَىٰ بَصَرِهِ غِشَاءً فَمَنْ يَهْدِيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ اللَّهِ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ (٢٣)

And indeed We gave the Book to the Israelites and bestowed on them authority and prophethood and provided them with wholesome sustenance and exalted them above the people of the world. And We gave them clear injunctions of God's *sharī'ah*; and they only differed after being granted knowledge because of mutual stubbornness. Indeed, their Lord will decide between them on the Day of Judgement in all matters they had differed. Then We set you on a clear *sharī'ah* from God; so follow it only and do not follow the desires of those who have no knowledge. These people will be of no benefit to you against God and these who wrong their souls help one another, and God is the helper of those who fear Him. (16-19)

This is a collection of verses which engenders vision in people and a guidance and mercy for those who have conviction. Do those who have committed sins think that We will equate them those who embraced faith

and did righteous deeds; their life and death shall be the same? What an evil judgement they are passing. And God has created the heavens and the earth with a purpose and so that each soul be recompensed according to what it did and they shall not be wronged. (20-22)

Have you him who makes his lust his god and he whom God led astray even though he had knowledge and set a seal upon his ears and heart and drew a veil over his eyes? Who can guide such people after God has led them astray? Will you people not take heed? (23)

Explanation

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ (١٦)¹³

This is a reference to the great favours done by the Almighty to the Israelites. The purpose of referring to them, as I have indicated earlier and as will become evident from subsequent verses, is to highlight the fact that the Almighty had done great favours to them, but they turned out to be such wretches that they not value any of these favours. The stage reached when they were stripped of God's gifts and blessings and wanted to see others in this same state.

The word الْكِتَاب obviously refers to the Torah.

Contextual indications show that the word حُكْم refers to the kingdom which was acquired by the Israelites in the times of David (sws) and Solomon (sws) and which continued to exist for a long period. The relationship between the Book and political authority is that one necessitates the other. The Book of God is a collection of all His directives and laws; for this reason, the nation to whom God bestows His scripture of law and injunctions is necessarily bestowed with political authority by Him because this is necessary for the implementation of the laws. Such nations are deprived of political authority when they show indifference to the directives of God.

The meaning of the word النُّبُوَّة is very evident. However, here it is mentioned for a specific purpose: after Moses (sws), a whole series of prophets were consecutively sent among the Israelites with Jesus (sws) being the last in line. The Israelites were condemned for the attitude they adopted with Jesus (sws) and then were deprived forever of both political

13. And indeed We gave the Book to the Israelites and bestowed on them authority and prophethood and provided them with wholesome sustenance and exalted them above the people of the world.

power and prophethood.

The words *وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ* refer to the abundance in sustenance, means of livelihood as well as the favours and affluence given to the Israelites. This began with their occupation of the land of Palestine and reached its climax in the time of Solomon (sws).

The superiority mentioned in *وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ* is an essential outcome of a nation being blessed with a divine Book. This Book is the light of guidance for the masses. When the Almighty hands over this light to a nation, then this means that He has chosen that nation to guide His creation. Indeed, this superiority is huge; however, at the same time, this superiority is dependent on certain conditions. As long as a nation continues to discharge this obligation of guiding people, it is blessed with this superiority. When it forgoes this obligation, it is deprived of this superiority.

وَأَتَيْنَاهُم بِبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْرِ فَمَا اخْتَلَفُوا إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَقْضِي بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ (١٧)¹⁴

The word *أَمْرٌ* here refers to the *sharī'ah* and religion. The verse says that God moreover blessed them with directives of the *sharī'ah* in a clear, certain and unequivocal manner so that there is no possibility that they differ with one another or try to escape from these directives. However, in spite of this elaborate arrangement, they differed with one another and this difference did not arise because there was a genuine reason for it. On the contrary, in spite of the presence of divine revelations, this difference arose in obduracy and malice for one another. The result was that they were finally deprived of the light of God. Now He will decide about their degree of veracity on the Day of Judgement and will also assess on that Day how much role did stubbornness, obstinacy, partisanship and the desire to defeat the opponent play.

Here the purpose to refer to this aspect of their character is two fold. On the one hand, it is to assure the Muslims that today people who have assumed the position of arbitrators and want to decide whether the Quraysh are on the right or the Muslims have themselves been deprived of God's religion because of mutual differences as well as mutual animosity and jealousy. If such wretched people show jealousy to the Muslims and

14. And We gave them clear injunctions of God's *sharī'ah*; and they only differed after being granted knowledge because of mutual stubbornness. Indeed, their Lord will decide between them on the Day of Judgement in all matters they had differed.

start opposing them, then this should be no matter of amazement!

On the other hand, it is to warn the Quraysh that they should not expect people who have are afflicted with self-inflicted blindness to show them the way. They will only want that just as they themselves are wandering in darkness by blowing out the light provided by God, in a similar manner, the Quraysh too are deprived of it and wander about in the same darkness.

A very important thing that becomes evident from this verse is that if there exists a difference of opinion in understanding a precept of religion, then this is neither a matter of amazement nor is it harmful for religion and its bearers. People of knowledge have differed with one another and can differ with one another; however, if the basis of this difference is mutual rivalry and jealousy and the desire to harm and defeat one another, then this attitude indeed raze down the whole edifice of religion. It was this type of difference which deprived the People of the Book from light of God and it is this type of difference which has doomed the Muslims as well.

ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاكَ عَلَىٰ شَرِيعَةٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْرِ فَاتَّبِعْهَا وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (١٨)¹⁵

The word *شَرِيعَةٍ* means “a clear path and a distinct method.” The expression *مِّنَ الْأَمْرِ* is used in this verse in the same meaning as the previous one. When these People of the Book lost the straight path which God had informed them of and no one remained to guide the creation, at that time the Almighty sent the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) with a clear *sharī‘ah*. The implication is that if today these Israelites are spreading the malicious campaign against the preaching mission of the Prophet (sws) that what was the need of a new Book and *sharī‘ah* in their presence and in the presence of their *sharī‘ah*, the reason for this is that they are not observing the mischief they have worked. Had they keenly observed it, they would have known the requirements of both religion and people which necessitated the Prophet’s advent. This topic has already been discussed in verse forty five of Sūrah Ḥammīn al-Sajdah.

Consider next the portion: *فَاتَّبِعْهَا وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ*. The word *أَهْوَاءَ* (literally: desires), as has been numerous explained in this *tafsīr*, refers to religious innovations. Since these innovations are invented to lend religious credence to ones desires, they are called *أَهْوَاءَ* so that their source is unfolded. Their origin is not religion or intellect; it is base whims and desires.

15. Then We set you on a clear *sharī‘ah* from God; so follow it only and do not follow the desires of those who have no knowledge.

These words emphasize on the Prophet (sws) to follow the clear *sharī'ah* given to him by the Almighty after it had been cleansed from all religious innovations and deviances and to not follow the religious innovations of those who know not which include the Jews and the Christians. The Idolaters of Arabia were obviously not conversant with divine scriptures or the *sharī'ah*. They did claim that they were the inheritors of Abraham's religion; however, all they inherited was the innovations which their ignorant forefathers had fabricated in the name of Abraham's religion. It is while supporting such innovations that they would fight with the Prophet (sws) alleging that his message was obliterating their ancestral religion. Though the Jews and Christians claimed to be the bearers of the Book of God, but, as is mentioned earlier, they had created so many differences in the religion of God that its pristine teachings had been lost. When the Qur'ān highlighted these real teachings negating their religious innovations (أَهْوَاء), they too got very angry. They contended that this new religion had endangered their beliefs which they laid claim to fool their masses. The fact of the matter was that the message of the Qur'ān had not only revived in its true form the religion of the prophets but also completed it. However, since the Jews and Christians were totally in the dark with regard to the real religion, so instead of siding with the Prophet (sws), they sided with the Quraysh and embarked upon wiping out Islam.

The Qur'ān has emphasized on the Prophet (sws) that it is he who is following the *sharī'ah* of God; so however much should his opponents oppose him, he should continue to adhere to it, and should certainly not follow the religious innovations of those who are unaware of the real religion of God.

This was not, God forbid, emphasized on the Prophet (sws) because of any possibility that he would be inclined to their religious innovations; this style was adopted to indirectly express abhorrence for them. The Almighty did not even like addressing such people directly. He deemed it appropriate to address his Prophet (sws) and tell him to abstain from their religious innovations. This style of address is adopted at numerous places in the Qur'ān.

إِنَّهُمْ لَنْ يَغْنُوا عَنْكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا وَإِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ وَاللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ (١٩)

However hard these people should try, the Prophet (sws) should not care about them. They will be of no avail to him before God. He alone

16. These people will be of no benefit to you against God and these who wrong their souls help one another, and God is the helper of those who fear Him.

and not they who will be asked of the responsibility imposed on him by God. Thus he should obey the directives of God. Whether these people try to stop him through their opposition or to soften him by showing sympathy, he should totally ignore them.

The word *وَإِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ وَاللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ* in *الظَّالِمِينَ* refers to both the People of the Book and the Idolaters because both were guilty of wronging their souls viz a viz the religion of God. The verse states that these wrongdoers have indeed joined hands in opposing the Qur'ān; however, the Prophet (sws) should not the slightest fear this alliance. God is at the support and backing of those who fear Him (ie the Muslims). The implication is that when God is their helper, why should they fear anyone. They should continue with their ways; God will ease out all their hardships. And who can conquer those who are helped by the might of God?

هَذَا بَصَائِرُ لِلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ (٢٠)¹⁷

This is a reference to the Qur'ān to oppose which the People of the Book and the Idolaters had joined hands. It has also been referred to in verse eleven. The demonstrative pronoun *هَذَا* refers to the Qur'ān in the collective sense and the word *بَصَائِرُ* has been used keeping in consideration the verses of the Qur'ān which the disbelievers were making fun of. The verse states that this Qur'ān is a collection of verses which provide vision and insight. If people are making fun of it and oppose it, then they are only fooling their own selves. It is evident from the style of this verse that as far as the ability of the Qur'ān to give insight and vision is concerned, like the sun it can be benefited from by everyone. The Almighty has revealed it for this very purpose; however, only those will avail this blessing who open their eyes to benefit from its radiance.

After delineating the general benefit, the words *وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ* point to the specific benefit of the Qur'ān: it is guidance and mercy for those who have conviction in the warnings and glad tidings sounded by it. I have explained elsewhere that wherever the words *هُدًى* (guidance) and *رَحْمَةٌ* (mercy) have been used in this context, both have a different meaning viz. for those who have conviction, this Qur'ān is a guidance in this world and mercy in the Hereafter; in this world, it will guide them to the straight path and in the Hereafter it will unlock the doors of God's immeasurable mercy.

17. This is a collection of verses which engenders vision in people and a guidance and mercy for those who have conviction.

أَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِينَ اجْتَرَحُوا السَّيِّئَاتِ أَنْ نَجْعَلَهُمْ كَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَوَاءً
حَيَاتُهُمْ وَمَمَاتُهُمْ سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ¹⁸(٢١)

The verse signifies that people who are making fun of the warnings and glad tidings sounded by the Qur'ān are rather of the view that the believers and disbelievers are equal in the sight of God; the life and death of both is the same. The verse says that if this is their view, then this is a very bad judgment that they are passing. In other words, it is absolutely against the awareness of justice divinely ordained in human nature. Whether a person leads a virtuous life or a sinful one, in his heart he always respects virtue and virtuous people. A person who views matters in an unbiased manner will never like that the virtuous and the sinful be treated equally. In all laws legislated by man in various periods of time, this principle of justice has always basically remained in consideration. So how can the principle of justice so universally acknowledged by human beings be regarded as devoid in the Almighty? If the virtuous and the sinful are equal in His eyes, then this would necessitate that either He is oppressive and unjust or is absolutely insensitive towards virtue and vice. Of course such concepts cannot even be imagined for God. If He is fair and just, then it is necessary that He bring about a day in which He administers impartial justice between people on that Day. He should then fully reward those who led a just and virtuous life and fully punish those who led a life of disobedience and defiance. The advent of such a day is also necessary because this world is governed on the basis trials and tests. Here both the righteous and the evil-doers have been given the opportunity to lead a life of virtue or of vice; the Almighty will not necessarily punish those who lead the life of vice here or reward those who lead a virtuous one. The Almighty has appointed a special day for this reward and punishment. The Qur'ān has been revealed to inform people of the punishment which will be meted out on that day and to inform and give glad tidings of the reward that will given be to people on that day. It is as if people who are making fun of these warnings and glad tidings are of the view that the Creator of this universe has created it for His own entertainment and sport and has no concern for its good and evil.

18. Do those who have committed sins think that We will equate them those who embraced faith and did righteous deeds; their life and death shall be the same? What an evil judgement they are passing.

وَخَلَقَ اللَّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ وَلِتُجْزَىٰ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ (٢٢)¹⁹

The verse implies that while these naïve people think what is stated in the previous verse, the fact of the matter is that the Almighty has created the heavens and the earth for a purpose. It is the requirement of this purpose that a day come wherein the Almighty decide between people and each person be rewarded or punished with full justice in accordance with his deeds. If such a day does not come and this world continues to exist for a time and then ends without any day of reward or punishment, then this would mean that it is without a purpose; it is a useless and baseless place and a playground of amusement for its Creator who is interested in sport and has created it for His merrymaking; He has fashioned this enormous creation without any purpose.

In my opinion, words to the effect لِيَفْصَلَ بَيْنَهُمْ are suppressed after بِالْحَقِّ. The part وَلِتُجْزَىٰ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ is co-ordinated to these suppressed words.

The qualifying clause وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ points to the fact that it is essential that on that day impartial justice be meted out to every soul and it should not be wronged in any manner. If a person is wronged in any manner or treated unjustly, then this would mean that this world is a totally meaningless and purposeless creation. This qualifying clause also refutes the baseless concepts of polytheism and intercession with which both the Idolaters and the People of the Book were afflicted. In the presence of these concepts, believing in the Hereafter or disbelieving in it is the same. How can impartial and unbiased justice be imagined when it is believed that whatever the deeds of a person, the deities and partners he imputes to God will earn him salvation through their intercession and influence. In this case, the door to injustice and oppression would stand opened.

أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ إِلَٰهَهُ هَوَاهُ وَأَضَلَّهُ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ وَخَتَمَ عَلَىٰ سَمْعِهِ وَقَفَلَهُ وَجَعَلَ عَلَىٰ بَصَرِهِ غِشَاوَةً فَمَنْ يَهْدِيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ اللَّهِ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ (٢٣)²⁰

In the previous verse, the erroneous concept about the life of the

19. And God has created the heavens and the earth with a purpose and so that each soul be recompensed according to what it did and they shall not be wronged.

20. Have you him who makes his lust his god and he whom God led astray even though he had knowledge and set a seal upon his ears and heart and drew a veil over his eyes? Who can guide such people after God has led them astray? Will you people not take heed?

Idolaters was censured. In this verse, an assurance is sounded to the Muslims about the Jews who are supporting the Idolaters in spite of being claimants to the Book of God; this is because the Almighty has set a seal on their ears and hearts and covered their eyes with a veil as a punishment for their misdeeds. So who can guide people who have been seized by the law of God.

The word أَفَرَأَيْتَ is used to express amazement or sorrow at the situation of a person. It is like saying: "Look at him ..." or "Have you seen such and such a person". In this verse, attention is directed with wonder at the circumstances of the Jews because God made them the recipients of His Book and *sharī'ah*; but they totally ignored it and worshipped their whims and desires. When a person becomes such a slave to his desires that he does not even care about explicit divine directives and regards following his desires to be beneficial for himself, then such a person is not a slave of God; he is the slave of his desires and religious innovations. This desire-worship trait of the Jews has been mentioned in detail in Sūrah Baqarah.

The words وَأَضَلَّهُ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ imply that the real deprivation of these people is not that they were without the radiance of faith; their misfortune is that instead of giving due importance to the knowledge given to them by God, they only followed their desires and religious innovations. The punishment of this love of theirs to go astray was that God let them wander astray. In verse seventeen earlier, it was said: وَأَتَيْنَاهُم بَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْرِ فَمَا اخْتَلَفُوا إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ (and We gave them clear injunctions of God's *sharī'ah*; and they only differed after being granted knowledge because of mutual stubbornness). What is said in this verse by the words مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ is the same as expressed by the words عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ in the verse under discussion. In other words, these people have been let to wander in darkness after they had been blessed with light; so Muslims should not expect anything good from them.

Consider next the portion: وَخَتَمَ عَلَىٰ سَمْعِهِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَجَعَلَ عَلَىٰ بَصَرِهِ غِشَاوَةً. What is said here has also been discussed in verse seven of Sūrah Baqarah about these very Jews; there I have explained in detail the nature of God setting seal on the hearts of people. The Qur'ān only mentions the Jews by this attribute.

There is a governing noun (*muḍāf*) suppressed after مِّن in قَمَن يَهْدِيهِ مِّن بَعْدِ. ie. أَنْ أَضَلَّهُ اللَّهُ مِّن بَعْدِ. The implication is that who can guide people on whose hearts a seal has been set as per the established practice of God. I have explained at many places in this *tafsīr* the practice of God about guiding people and leading them astray. Readers

may look up the discussion of sealing of hearts by God in the *tafsīr* of Sūrah Baqarah.

The words أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ counsel – in fact – warn Muslims: why are they amazed that these literate claimants to the Book and religion of God have become the enemies of the Qur’ān and friends of the Idolaters. Muslims should remember that God guides only those who duly value His guidance. Those who do not do so are caught in the noose of this very guidance. I have explained this in the following verse of Sūrah Baqarah: (يُضِلُّ بِهِ كَثِيرًا وَيَهْدِي بِهِ كَثِيرًا (2:26)) (through it, He guides many and leads astray many, (2:26)).

Section III: Verses (23-37)

In the succeeding verses, a comment is made on an absurd demand of the rejecters of the Day of Judgement: when they were warned of it, they would say that if it is to come, then the Prophet (sws) should raise their forefathers back to life! While refuting this demand, the fate of these rejecters is portrayed which they will necessarily encounter in the Hereafter. At the same time, it is delineated that on the day they will meet this fate, no deity or intercessor will be able to save them from the punishment of God. On that day, the supreme triumph will be achieved only by those who profess faith in the Hereafter and in monotheism and instead of relying on polytheism and intercession rely on what they can earn through pious deeds.

Readers may now proceed to study the verses.

Text and Translation

وَقَالُوا مَا هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا نَمُوتُ وَنَحْيَا وَمَا يُهْلِكُنَا إِلَّا الدَّهْرُ وَمَا لَهُمْ بِذَلِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَظُنُّونَ (٢٤) وَإِذَا تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ مَّا كَانَ حُجَّتَهُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا اتُّتُوا بِآبَائِنَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٢٥) قُلِ اللَّهُ يُحْيِيكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمِيتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يَجْمَعُكُمْ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٢٦) وَلِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَيَوْمَ تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ يُنْحَسِرُ الْمُبْطِلُونَ (٢٧) وَتَرَىٰ كُلُّ أُمَّةٍ جَائِيَةً كُلُّ أُمَّةٍ تُدْعَىٰ إِلَىٰ كِتَابِهَا الْيَوْمَ تُحْزَرُونَ مَّا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٢٨) هَذَا كِتَابُنَا يَنْطِقُ عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْحَقِّ إِنَّا كُنَّا نَسْتَنسِخُ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٢٩) فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فَيُدْخِلُهُمْ

رَبُّهُمْ فِي رَحْمَتِهِ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْقَوْرُ الْمُبِينُ (٣٠) وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَفَلَمْ تَكُنْ آيَاتِي تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ فَاسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ وَكُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا مُّجْرِمِينَ (٣١) وَإِذَا قِيلَ إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَالسَّاعَةُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهَا قُلْتُمْ مَا نَدْرِي مَا السَّاعَةُ إِنْ نَّظُنُّ إِلَّا ظَنًّا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُستَيْقِنِينَ (٣٢) وَبَدَأَ لَهُمْ سَيِّئَاتُ مَا عَمِلُوا وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ (٣٣) وَقِيلَ الْيَوْمَ نَنسَاكُمْ كَمَا نَسِيتُمْ لِقَاءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هَذَا وَمَأْوَاكُمُ النَّارُ وَمَا لَكُم مِّن تَاصِرِينَ (٣٤) ذَلِكَ بِأَنكُم كُنْتُمْ تَخَذُونَ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ هُزُوًا وَعَرَّثْتُمُ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا قَالِیَوْمَ لَا يُخْرَجُونَ مِنْهَا وَلَا هُمْ يُسْتَعْتَبُونَ (٣٥) فَلِلَّهِ الْحَمْدُ رَبِّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَرَبِّ الْأَرْضِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٣٦) وَلَهُ الْكِبَرِيَاءُ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (٣٧)

And they say: "Our life is only the life of this world. We die and live here and nothing but the fortunes of time destroy us." And they have no knowledge of this. They are merely speculating. And when Our clear verses are recited to them, their only argument is: "If you are true in your claim, bring back to us our fathers!" Tell them: "It is God who gives you life and then gives you death. It is He who will then gather you till the Day of Resurrection in which there is no doubt; yet most men do not know this fact." (24-26)

And to God belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth. And on the day when the Hour comes, the wrongdoers will be the losers. And you shall see each community on its knees. Each community shall be summoned to its record of deeds. They will be told: "You shall this day be rewarded for your deeds. This is Our record which will bear true witness over you. We have been recording whatever you have been doing." (27-29)

As for those who embraced faith and did good deeds, their Lord will admit them into His mercy. This is, in fact, a clear triumph. As for those who disbelieved, they will be told: "Were not My verses recited out before you; so you showed arrogance and you were a criminal people; and when you would be told: 'God's promise is true and the Hour of Doom is sure to come,' you replied: 'We know nothing of the Hour of Doom. It is but a conjecture nor are we convinced.'" (30-32)

And the evil of their deeds they did will manifest itself to them, and what they would make fun of will encompass them. And it will be said to them: "Today we will disregard you the way you remained oblivious of the meeting of this day of yours and Hell is your abode none will be your helper. This is because you made fun of God's verses and were led away by the worldly life." Thus, today neither shall they be taken out from it

nor shall they be given the opportunity to present an apology. Thus, God alone is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, Lord of the worlds, worthy of being praised and to Him belongs the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth and He is Mighty and Wise. (33-37)

Explanation

وَقَالُوا مَا هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا نَمُوتُ وَنَحْيَا وَمَا يُهْلِكُنَا إِلَّا الدَّهْرُ وَمَا لَهُمْ بِذَلِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَظُنُّونَ (٢٤)²¹

Mentioned in verses twenty one and twenty two earlier were the arguments relating to morals and morality as well as the ones found within man and outside him in support of the Day of Judgement. Here an objection on these arguments raised by the rejecters of the Day of Judgement is referred to: when they are reminded of it, they very arrogantly say that their existence is confined to this worldly life only; after this life, there is no life or death; people who threaten them with life after death and accountability of their deeds are merely bluffing and are inflicted with a baseless notion.

The words نَمُوتُ وَنَحْيَا express their view that their life and death is confined to this world. After dying everything will come to an end.

The words وَمَا يُهْلِكُنَا إِلَّا الدَّهْرُ continue to state their stance. They are of the opinion that it is absolutely wrong that God gives them death and that He is gathering them and one day to hold them accountable for their deeds and then reward and punish them; they contend that it is in fact the fortunes of time which destroys them and not God; just as a tree sprouts and reaches its culmination and then becomes dry to wither away, similarly, they too are born; then because of vagaries of time either die in their childhood or youth or do so in old age.

The part وَمَا لَهُمْ بِذَلِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَظُنُّونَ is a comment of God on their nonsensical talk: whatever they say is not based on knowledge; it is mere speculation and conjecture; they do not want to believe in the Hereafter because this would curtail their freedom and stall their luxurious life-style. For this reason, they utter such absurd words without even thinking what they are saying. They are thereby denying a reality to which their very nature and the whole system of this world bear witness to. The Hereafter is a consequence of God's power, wisdom, mercy, providence and justice. If it does not come into being, then this world becomes

21. And they say: "Our life is only the life of this world. We die and live here and nothing but the fortunes of time destroy us." And they have no knowledge of this. They are merely speculating.

merely a place of sport and amusement.

Some people have deduced from this verse that there was a group of atheists in Arabia which denied God and the Hereafter. In my view, this is not correct. Whether there were a few such individuals or not is another thing; however, as a group, there was not a single person in those times who explicitly denied God and the Hereafter or was a pure materialist. The Arabs were not those who denied these realities; they were polytheists and because of this polytheism, they had made God totally ineffectual in the system of this world; they also did not absolutely deny the Hereafter and the life therein; they were hesitant and uncertain about them. They reckoned that being raised to life again after death was in the first place very improbable and if this would ever take place, they would have to deal with their own deities and not God; these deities would procure high ranks for them and if God would intend to punish them, these deities would save them from Him because of their power and influence.

Their statement that the fortunes of time destroy them does not insinuate God's denial; by these words, they only wanted to refute the philosophy of history which the Qur'ān recounted with great detail before the Quraysh that the earlier peoples were destroyed because of their erroneous beliefs, misdeeds and rejection of the Messengers of God; if they too follow in their steps, their fate will be the same as well. Since this warning was based on certain facts, people who were far-sighted to some extent were influenced by it. They feared this warning to be true and that if they too deny the true call like the 'Ād, the Thamūd, the people of Madian and the Pharaoh and not reform their beliefs and deeds, they too might be tormented by the punishment the Qur'ān is threatening them with. In order to appease such people, the Quraysh fabricated the philosophy that it is absolutely wrong to think that the previous peoples were destroyed because of erroneous beliefs, misdeeds and rejection of the Messengers of God; what relation has God to such things; people are only destroyed because of the fortunes of time; a person is born, he grows up, reaches old age and then dies and his beliefs and deeds have no relationship with his death; his death is only a result of the vagaries of time; on similar lines, nations are born, progress and develop, create cultures and civilizations, vanquish lands and then die away because of the fortunes of time; a drama is continuously being enacted on the stage of this world and will continue to go on; it is nothing but the product of fortunes of time; people who relate this to belief and deeds are merely superstitious and want to afflict others with a superstition as well.

The words وَمَا لَهُمْ بِذَلِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَظُنُّونَ express the fact that these people would say this with arrogance and authority without having any

knowledge in this matter; it is mere speculation on which they have built the edifice of this philosophy. The teaching of human intellect and nature, of the world inside man and that outside him as well of prophets and sages is the same as what the Qur'ān is presenting; however, these people instead of knowledge want to follow conjectures because only conjecture and not knowledge can provide sanction to all their desires. This style of discourse expresses great yearning and sorrow: very unfortunate are these people who have made their thoughts and conjectures to be their guides in such a great matter.

وَإِذَا تَنَلَّى عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ مَّا كَانَ حُجَّتَهُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا ائْتُوا بِآبَائِنَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (٢٥)

This verse explains the conjecture of these people which they made as their guide to counter the clear arguments of the Qur'ān: when they are recited out explicit verses of the Qur'ān relating to the Hereafter, the only argument they have to negate it is their demand from the Prophet (sws) and their companions that if they are true in this claim, then they should bring back to life the deceased ancestors of these people.

The word *حُجَّتَهُمْ* is the enunciative (*khabr*) of *كَانَ*. This subject is discussed in Sūrah 'Ankabūt in slightly different words: *فَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا ائْتِنَا بِعَذَابِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ* (٢٩: ٢٩) (the only answer of their nation would be: "if you are truthful in your claim bring to us the torment of God, (29:29)). By the word *حُجَّتْ* is meant their answer. Out of arrogance they would regard it to be a conclusive argument; for this reason, the Qur'ān has sarcastically called it *حُجَّتْ*. The objective is to show that in such a big issue, they have fallen back on an answer which has neither any near or distant relationship with the real discussion nor has it got anything to do with reason and logic; it is only a baseless notion of theirs; they are under the wrong impression that they have been able to save themselves from what the Qur'ān is warning them of.

قُلِ اللَّهُ يُحْيِيكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمِيتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يَجْمَعُكُمْ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٢٦)

In this verse, they are reminded of the real claim through the tongue of

22. And when Our clear verses are recited to them, their only argument is: "If you are true in your claim, bring back to us our fathers!"

23. Tell them: "It is God who gives you life and then gives you death. It is He who will then gather you till the Day of Resurrection in which there is no doubt; yet most men do not know this fact."

the Prophet (sws). The style adopted is such that the argument in favour of the claim is made evident by its own self. The verse says that they are not being told that whoever they pinpoint today can be brought back to life; what they are being told is that it is God alone Who gives them life and He alone Who gives them death; then He will gather them and this gathering together will continue till the Day of Judgement and there is no doubt about the arrival of that Day.

In other words, when life and death is in the hands of God and this is a fact that cannot be denied, then the question whether He can recreate after giving death is needless. Why cannot He who has given life give life again? When He alone has given death to whom He has given life and if He wants to give another life to whom He has created, then who can stop Him in this? This could only have been possible if someone had the ability to give life and some other to give death. Inalienable proofs show that this universe is devoid of this duality. Its very existence bears witness that only one intention prevails in it.

The words *ثُمَّ يَجْمَعُكُمْ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ* mention the essential requirement of life and death: if after these, a day of accountability does not come, then the whole universe becomes a meaningless and purposeless creation. Hence it is essential that God gather everyone one day and this gathering together continue till the Day of Judgement whose advent is essential to make this life and death to be purposeful and about whose advent there is no doubt.

The preposition *إِلَى* after *يَجْمَعُكُمْ* expresses continuity and proximity; ie, this gathering together will continue till the Day of Judgement. It is evident from this that before the Day of Judgement, no one will be raised up nor did the Qur'ān or Prophet (sws) ever make such a claim. Hence, meaningless is the claim of the people who are demanding that their forefathers should be raised to life and be shown to them.

The words *وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ* express sorrow at the state of the disbelievers of the Day of Judgement: there is no question of any doubt in what they are being informed of; however, most people know not; ie. they do not know the dreadful punishment they will encounter by denying this obvious reality.

وَلِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَيَوْمَ تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ يُحْسِرُ الْمُبْطِلُونَ (٢٧)²⁴

If these people trust their alleged deities that they will save them in case there is a Day of Judgement, then this is a naïve notion. To God

24. And to God belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth. And on the day when the Hour comes, the wrongdoers will be the losers.

alone belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth; no one can dare influence His decisions. Those who are afflicted with such baseless desires will be ruined when that Day comes.

وَتَرَى كُلَّ أُمَّةٍ جَائِيَةً كُلُّ أُمَّةٍ تُدْعَى إِلَى كِتَابِهَا الْيَوْمَ تُجْزَوْنَ مَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٢٨)

The verse portrays the situation people will encounter on that day: every group will be sitting on its knees with legs folded to hear the verdict; each group will be called towards its record of deeds and will be told that on that day they will receive what they did in the previous world.

Though the word تَرَى is singular, however, its address like أَلَمْ تَرَ can also be general; here contextual evidence shows that this is the case here too.

The words كُلُّ أُمَّةٍ refer to the fact that on that day everyone – believers as well as disbelievers, righteous as well as wrong-doers will be gathered; no one will be given exception in this attendance.

The word جَائِيَةً is from جَاءَ يَجِيئُ. The expression جَاءَ الرَّجُلُ has been explained by lexicographers as جَلَسَ عَلَى رُكْبَتَيْهِ (a person sat on both his knees).²⁶ Slaves, subordinates and criminals used to sit before their masters in this manner to hear their verdict.

The word كِتَاب here refers to the register of deeds because this book will contain the record of deeds of groups and nations. The word register is very aptly used thus. In Sūrah Tatwīf, inshāllah, this will be further explained. There the names of these registers are also mentioned.

Words to the effect قِيلَ لَهُمْ (it will be said to them) are suppressed before الْيَوْمَ in كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ الْيَوْمَ on account of contextual indication. Each group will be called towards its register of deeds and would be told that on that day it will be rewarded for whatever it did in the previous world.

The implied meaning is that a person who did not do good deeds and only dreamt of a blissful future on the basis of polytheism and intercession will find nothing but deprivation for himself on that day.

هَذَا كِتَابُنَا يَنْطِقُ عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْحَقِّ إِنَّا كُنَّا نَسْتَنسِخُ مَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (٢٩)

What is said here is part of the previous sentence: they will be informed

25. And you shall see each community on its knees. Each community shall be summoned to its record of deeds. They will be told: “You shall this day be rewarded for your deeds.

26. Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-‘arab*, vol. 14, 131.

27. This is Our record which will bear true witness over you. We have been recording whatever you have been doing.”

that there is no possibility of any injustice or oversight from this register; it will truly and faithfully tell them what each person did because the record of each would be found in written form. Whatever they have been doing was being noted down by the angels at the behest of God.

فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فَيُدْخِلُهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ فِي رَحْمَتِهِ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْمُبِينُ (٣٠)²⁸

This verse depicts the fate of each group once they have been informed of their record. The fate of the believers is mentioned first: those who believed and did good deeds will be admitted by God to His mercy. The word رَحْمَتٍ (mercy) here refers to the fact that not only will these people be rewarded because of their deeds, they will be immensely blessed by Him as well. After this, they are praised by saying that it is this which is open success that these people will achieve and not the luxuries of this world by which these foolish people were lured away only to lose this eternal kingdom.

وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَفَلَمْ تَكُنْ آيَاتِي تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ فَاسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ وَكُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا مُّجْرِمِينَ (٣١)²⁹

This verse depicts the fate of the disbelievers; their fate is mentioned in more detail than that of the believers. This *sūrah* specifically deals with them; in particular, with the arrogant among them. The verse says that as for those who disbelieved, they would be told that is not this a reality that when in order to inform them of this day, the verses of God would be recited out to them, they showed arrogance and persisted on their sins in spite of God's warnings and reminders. The details of their persistence on this arrogance has already been alluded to in verses 8-9 and 24-25 of this very *sūrah*. At this stage, the question posed to them would obviously not be meant to elicit an answer; the purpose would be to rebuke them in order to further humiliate them.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَالسَّاعَةُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهَا قُلْتُمْ مَا نَدْرِي مَا السَّاعَةُ إِنْ نَظُنُّ إِلَّا ظَنًّا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُتَّقِينَ (٣٢)³⁰

The verse explains their arrogance: when it is said to them the promise

28. As for those who embraced faith and did good deeds, their Lord will admit them into His mercy. This is, in fact, a clear triumph.

29. As for those who disbelieved, they will be told: "Were not My verses recited out before you; so you showed arrogance and you were a criminal people;

30. "... and when you would be told: 'God's promise is true and the Hour of Doom is sure to come,' you replied: 'We know nothing of the Hour of Doom. It is but a conjecture nor are we convinced.'"

of God regarding reward and punishment is bound to be fulfilled and that there is not the slightest doubt about the advent of the Day of Judgment, they answer with great arrogance that they do not know the meaning of the Day of Judgment; it is a thought in their hearts and they have no conviction in it.

It is evident from this verse that as far as the thought was concerned, these disbelievers did have it in their hearts; however, their demand was that only when they are fully convinced about it, then they will believe in it. Their demand [expressed earlier in the *sūrah*] was: ائْتُوا بِآبَائِنَا إِن كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (if you are true in your claim, bring back to us our fathers). Obviously, this was an absurd demand. It meant that a person will only believe in that thing which he can see from his eyes and will not believe in any other thing even though there may exist very clear logical and ethical arguments in its favour. If a person becomes so foolish, then the faculty of sense and reason becomes absolutely redundant; in fact, the only difference that then remains between man and cattle is that of appearance. This means that a person should not believe in the faculty of sense and reason a person has because he has never seen it nor touched it. If we evaluate the treasure trove of knowledge and its disciplines that man has, it will become evident that a large part of it comprises intellectual and moral principles. If the belief of these arrogant people of acknowledging only observable realities is accepted, then this would mean that all these branches of knowledge created by man should be dumped.

Deliberation will reveal the fact that in such important matters which can have far reaching results, the guidance of overriding conjecture is enough. A fissure created in a dam which can endanger the whole city will not attract our attention only when it has become a wide hole; sensible people remain on guard in such matters much earlier. The matter of the Hereafter is a very important one – in fact the most important matter of this universe. The arguments in favour of it mentioned in the Qur’ān and in the previous scriptures are irrefutable. At best, what a person can say is that he cannot believe in it the way he can believe an eye-witness happening. If he cannot be convinced to such an extent, then let it be so; what should be seen is that can he say with full certainty that there is no Hereafter? Obviously, no one can make such a claim. In such a situation, prudence demands that a person compare which among the two scenarios is beneficial to him: should a person live his life being lured away by his desires becoming indifferent to the Hereafter and not even concern himself with what will happen after his death or should he believe in the Hereafter and lead a life while considering that he will be rewarded or punished one day though he might have to sacrifice some of

his desires? Deliberation will lead us to conclude that it is more wise to adopt the second of these scenarios because adopting the first one can eternally and permanently put a person in danger and its only benefit is that he, as per his arrogant claim, will think that he is free to choose any life according to his desires even though their fulfillment is not based on his will. On the other hand, there is no danger in the second scenario. If the Hereafter comes, a person will be rewarded with an eternal kingdom, and if, as per the opinion of the disbelievers it does not come, what will be the loss? At best, he will have to sacrifice some of his worldly desires in this worldly life whilst their fulfillment too is not in his control and rests with some other Being.

وَبَدَا لَهُمْ سَيِّئَاتُ مَا عَمِلُوا وَحَاقَ بِهِم مَّا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِءُونَ (٣٣)³¹

The consequences of the intellectual and moral sins a person does in this world do not come before him immediately; for this reason he becomes brave on this respite and regards his well-wishers to be fools and makes fun of them what to speak of paying heed to their advice. On that day, the blindest of people will see the horrible harvest of the seeds he had sown in the previous world; the messengers of God had warned him of the evil fate of the venomous seeds he had cultivated, but he paid no heed to their warnings. On that day, the punishment he boldly used to make fun of will embrace him in such a manner that he will not be able to escape it in any way.

وَقِيلَ الْيَوْمَ نَنْسَاكُمْ كَمَا نَسِيتُمْ لِقَاءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هَذَا وَمَأْوَاكُمُ النَّارُ وَمَا لَكُم مِّن تَاصِرِينَ (٣٤)³²

The verb نَسِيَ here means “to ignore”. In other words, in the very first phase, they would be told that just as in the previous world they had ignored the warnings of the messengers of God and his righteous people and did not pay heed to their calls about being raised up on such a horrible day, in a similar manner, God will ignore them on that day. However much may they plead and beseech Him, they will not receive any response to their imploring. They should also remember that if they were very proud of their group of associates and comrades, they too will

31. And the evil of their deeds they did will manifest itself to them, and what they would make fun of will encompass them.

32. And it will be said to them: “Today we will disregard you the way you remained oblivious of the meeting of this day of yours and Hell is your abode none will be your helper.

be of no help to them on that day, and if they trusted the intercession of their deities and of the partners they had imputed to God, then they too will be of no avail to them.

ذَلِكُمْ بِأَنكُمْ اتَّخَذْتُمْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ هُزُورًا وَعَرَّثْتُمْ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا فَالْيَوْمَ لَا يُخْرَجُونَ مِنْهَا وَلَا هُمْ يُسْتَعْتَبُونَ³³ (٣٥)

The implication of this verse is that these people became worthy of this indifferent attitude from God because when His verses informing them of the Last Day would be recited out to them, they would make fun of them and would walk away from that place as if they had not heard a thing. This subject has already been brought up in verses eight and nine earlier.

The words *وَعَرَّثْتُمْ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا* imply that they concluded from the affluence and opulence God blessed them with in this world that they were worthy of these favours and that this prosperity of theirs is an evidence to the fact that there is nothing wrong in their beliefs and deeds; their wealth and riches made them so arrogant that they made fun of those people who tried to direct their attention to the erroneous nature of their beliefs and deeds; they even went as far as to inquire from these well-wishers of theirs whether these well-wishers were better off or they themselves. They contended that when their circumstances were far better than those of their well-wishers, then why should they not believe that their beliefs and deeds were also better and that if there was something wrong, it was not in them but in their well-wishers.

The words *فَالْيَوْمَ لَا يُخْرَجُونَ مِنْهَا وَلَا هُمْ يُسْتَعْتَبُونَ* state that because of this arrogance neither will they be able to come out of Hell nor afforded with the opportunity of seeking repentance from their Lord and win His favour. Every door to any hope will be closed upon them.

The change of style in this section of the verse is worth noting. In the previous section, the discourse directly addressed the disbelievers; here, they are no longer addressed. It as if the threat to ignore them has begun to manifest itself so that they were not even deemed worthy of being directly addressed. It needs to be kept in consideration that indirect address is often used at instances when the addressees are not worthy of being addressed. Several examples of this style have been pointed out earlier in this *tafsīr*.

33. This is because you made fun of God's verses and were led away by the worldly life." Thus, today neither shall they be taken out from it nor shall they be given the opportunity to present an apology.

قَلِيلَهُ الْحَمْدُ رَبِّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَرَبِّ الْأَرْضِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٣٦) وَلَهُ الْكِبَرِيَاءُ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (٣٧)³⁴

Here, at the end, all the discussion thus far is summed up: when all facts are evident, then it is only God Who should be the fountainhead of all praise and gratitude from His creatures. He is the Lord of the heavens, Lord of the earth and Lord of all the creatures of the Universe. The implication of this statement is that from where have these people fashioned other deities as their Lord? How have they set up separate Gods for the heavens and the earth? And in spite of being created and nurtured by God, why have they invented so many deities – both male and female.

The words وَلَهُ الْكِبَرِيَاءُ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ are the second necessary consequence of what is stated above: when God is the Lord of the Universe, then in the presence of the real Master and King, how can some other being be regarded as sovereign and exalted? In this situation, He alone has the right to all sovereignty; everyone must submit and resign themselves to Him; if anyone in His kingdom tries to rise against him, it is as if he challenges His sovereignty, and he who does so will necessarily meet his fate. God is Mighty ie. He is dominant and powerful. Thus no one can save himself from His grasp; however, He is wise as well; thus if He has given respite to people to rebel, then people should not misconstrue this lenience on His part that they are beyond His grasp; on the contrary, every act of God is based on wisdom and this wisdom will one day manifest itself before everyone.

By the grace of God, I come to the end of the *tafsīr* of this *sūrah*: فَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ عَلَى إِحْسَانِهِ (so all gratitude be to God for His favour).

Raḥmānābād,

21st June, 1976 AD

22nd Jamādī al-Thānī 1396 AH

34. Thus, God alone is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, Lord of the worlds, worthy of being praised and to Him belongs the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth and He is Mighty and Wise.